

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 53

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 30

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 53—Relative to Autism Awareness Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State May 20, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 53, Price. Autism Awareness Month.

This measure would declare April 2009 as Autism Awareness Month and recognize that individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are valued and important members of society. This measure would recognize the parents and relatives of individuals with ASDs for their sacrifice and dedication in providing for the special needs of individuals with ASDs. This measure would also declare the Legislature's continued support of the work of specified organizations related to ASDs.

WHEREAS, Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. It is part of a group of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASDs); and

WHEREAS, Autism and ASDs are neurodevelopmental disorders of unknown etiology that may cause significant impairments in language, communications, and social interactions, abnormalities in behaviors, and other physical manifestations; and

WHEREAS, ASDs are abnormalities of brain development and function that are typically diagnosed during the first three years of life, are four times more likely to occur in males than females, and impact all segments of California's population regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other factors; and

WHEREAS, ASDs now impact one out of every 150 children in the United States and are the fastest growing serious developmental disability, making these disorders more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined; and

WHEREAS, Most school districts in California have seen a doubling of students with ASDs in the past five years. The number of Californians with ASDs who are served by the State Department of Developmental Services now exceeds 35,000, which is a number that has more than tripled since 1998 and has increased more than twelvefold since 1987; and

WHEREAS, Many Californians are not adequately informed about ASDs and the value and importance of early identification, assessment, and treatment of these disorders; and

WHEREAS, Individuals with ASDs and their families in underserved populations face tremendous and overwhelming challenges in accessing and navigating the complex programs and services for these disorders; and

WHEREAS, Parents and family members have made invaluable contributions through their commitment, caring, and advocacy to important advances in research, education, and treatment for individuals with ASDs; and

WHEREAS, California has been the established leader in providing services and supports for the early identification, assessment, intervention, education, and treatment of individuals with ASDs that began with the passage of landmark state legislation such as the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act of 1969 and Assembly Bill 3854 (1974, Burton), relating to autism and public education; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, Senator Perata authored Senate Concurrent Resolution 51 (Resolution Chapter 124 of the Statutes of 2005) that established, with the support of Assembly Speaker Núñez and bipartisan backing, the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism, which is comprised of, among others, Senator Darrell Steinberg as chairperson, and Dr. Barbara Firestone, President and CEO of The Help Group, as vice chairperson, to identify gaps in programs and services related to the education and treatment of children, adolescents, transitional youth, and adults with ASDs, and to provide recommendations that will contribute to the development of a comprehensive and integrated continuum of programs, services, and funding; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, Assembly Member Pavley authored Assembly Bill 2513 (Chapter 783 of the Statutes of 2006), which was sponsored and supported by the California School Boards Association, California Association of Suburban School Districts, and the Association of California School Administrators, directed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish the Superintendent's Autism Advisory Committee (SAAC), and required this multidisciplinary advisory group to develop recommendations by which public and nonpublic schools, including charter schools, can better serve pupils with autism and their parents; and

WHEREAS, The Budget Act of 2006 provided additional funding that expanded the ASDs initiative to include additional professional training and development, state and regional ASDs resource centers, expansion of ASDs support staff, and the development, publication, and dissemination of "ASD: Best Practice Guidelines for Treatment and Interventions"; and

WHEREAS, In 2007, Senator Steinberg authored Senate Concurrent Resolution 42 (Resolution Chapter 50 of the Statutes of 2007) which proclaimed April 2007 as Autism Awareness Month, and acknowledged the contributions made in the area of early autism and ASDs intervention treatment; and

WHEREAS, The State Department of Developmental Services, the regional centers for individuals with developmental disabilities, the State Department of Education and local school districts, the State Department of Health Care Services, and the Centers for Autism Developmental

Disabilities Research and Epidemiology (CADDRE) Network are committed to improving the quality of life for individuals with ASDs; and

WHEREAS, The University of California, Davis M.I.N.D. Institute, launched in 1998 with inspiration from the parent community and with funding from the California State Legislature, is now recognized internationally as a premier research institution that is advancing our knowledge of ASDs and other neurodevelopmental disorders; and

WHEREAS, First 5 California has made the issue of autism for children who are five years of age and younger an important priority, including the First 5 California Special Needs Project, which indicates that 19 percent of children suffer from developmental delays or disabilities that are frequently undetected by routine examinations during the first five years of life; and

WHEREAS, The Help Group, the Autism Society of America, Autism Speaks, Families for Early Autism Treatment (FEAT), Disability Rights California, and other nonprofit organizations contribute to the well-being of individuals with autism and their families; and

WHEREAS, The University of California, Los Angeles is recognized as a Center of Excellence in autism by the National Institutes of Health and has made significant contributions to the field; and

WHEREAS, The Special Needs Network, Inc. (SNN) is a community-based organization founded to respond to the needs of low-income and poor families struggling with raising a child or adult with developmental disabilities, particularly as it relates to autism; and

WHEREAS, SNN will celebrate World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD) on April 2, 2009, and Autism Awareness Month in April 2009; and

WHEREAS, WAAD shines a bright light on autism as a growing global health crisis. WAAD activities help to increase and develop world knowledge of the autism epidemic and impart information regarding the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention; and

WHEREAS, Current scientific research demonstrates that the early identification and intervention of children with ASDs can result in significant positive outcomes in many children with ASDs; and

WHEREAS, Public information and awareness efforts are of paramount importance in accelerating early identification efforts and the proliferation of early intervention programs and services; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature affirms its commitment to the important issues described in this resolution by declaring April 2009 as Autism Awareness Month in California and emphasizes that each and every individual with an ASD is a valued and important member of our society; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature recognizes and commends the parents and relatives of individuals with ASDs for their sacrifice and dedication in providing for the special needs of individuals with ASDs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature continues to support the important work of the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism, the Superintendent's Autism Advisory Committee, The Help Group, the University of California,

Davis M.I.N.D. Institute, First 5 California, Families for Early Autism Treatment (FEAT), Disability Rights California, the Autism Society of America, Autism Speaks, the State Department of Health Care Services, Centers for Autism Developmental Disabilities Research and Epidemiology (CADDRE) Network, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Special Needs Network, and others; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature stresses the need to identify children with ASDs and to begin early intervention services immediately after a child has been diagnosed with autism, and that those services, interventions, and supports for individuals with ASDs and their families must be provided in an integrated, seamless, comprehensive, individually focused, and culturally competent manner that are delivered for the duration of the individual's lifespan; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.